

ISRAEL-HAMAS CEASEFIRE DEAL

Can life start again in Gaza?



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YUSEF SY RAMADAN

After 467 days of massacre committed by the occupationist state of Israel—under the leadership of the fascist Benjamin Netanyahu—the people of Gaza can now dream of waking up to sounds and smells different from what they have been accustomed to: bombs, drones, gunpowder, and corpses. On January 15, Israel and Hamas reached a ceasefire deal that had been on the table since May last year. The next day, however, the Israeli cabinet delayed voting on the deal, accusing Hamas of backtracking although Hamas had accepted the agreement that was announced. It was expected that the deal would come into effect on Sunday, but the cost of the latest delay only means that more Palestinian lives will be lost, as it has been for each and every day that Netanyahu decided to pull out of ceasefire agreements.

Previously, the Biden administration seemed reluctant to apply enough pressure. The answer to the questions “Why now?” and “Why not months ago?” lie in the change of leadership in the US, in my opinion. In December, President-elect Donald Trump warned that if Israeli hostages in Gaza were not released, “it will not be good for Hamas and it will not be good, frankly, for anyone. All hell will break out.” As I see it, this could not have been done by the outgoing President Joe Biden, as it long eluded his administration. President-elect Trump shares a friendship with Netanyahu, who reveres him. I suspect the delay from Netanyahu's side could also be until Trump takes office on January 20, so his resume will have the ceasefire written on it



**People celebrate in central Gaza on January 15, 2025 as news spread that a ceasefire deal had been reached between Israel and Hamas, aimed at ending more than 15 months of war and genocide.**

PHOTO: AFP

instead of Biden's.

Netanyahu's extremist cabinet has been against this deal; far-right ministers Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich have publicly ranted about how awful the deal is. Now, why would Netanyahu agree on a ceasefire that would cause division in his coalition? (When Ben-Gvir says he will bring down the “government,” it essentially means he will quit the coalition.) The political calculus seems to have

was no longer in the best interest of the US, but since he is unpredictable and reactive, Netanyahu, who faces criminal charges but wants to stay in power, would not risk going against the assertive incoming president.

In the end, Netanyahu did not achieve the “absolute victory” he spoke about, unless victory for him means the killing of thousands of children, women and men, destroying more than three quarters of Gaza,

of Israeli forces from Gaza in the first phase, which Netanyahu was opposed to. More importantly, the second phase of the deal promises “a permanent end to the war.” There remains possibilities that this could be a temporary respite for the citizens of Gaza, and Netanyahu's commitment to the deal will face its biggest test in the second phase. The hope lies in Trump's ability to ensure

the success of the deal, though his incoming administration is filled with staunch pro-Israel figures.

But, say, the deal endures, then what awaits the day after the war ends? For Netanyahu, he must face the arrest warrant from the International Criminal Court for heinous war crimes. He will have to face the indiscriminate killing of Palestinians, and most importantly, the abject failure to protect Israel's security on October 7, 2023. Israel as a state will have to reckon with genocide committed by its people, and the utter dehumanisation of Palestinians.

For Palestinians in Gaza, the ceasefire deal brings cautious optimism. As it was announced, the people of Gaza celebrated—an unusual sight in the rubble-filled strip. Al Jazeera's Hani Mahmoud, reporting from Deir-Al-Balah in Central Gaza, said, “For a couple of hours, people turned this whole area into a stage of celebration, something we are not used to seeing here as the area used to be a stage for funerals for the victims of war and a space filled with agony and sadness.” Till the deal comes into effect, Israel will continue to commit massive atrocities, ending lives of innocent people as a reward for Netanyahu's hardline government, which believes a ceasefire to end mass suffering is akin to “surrender.” Only when the ceasefire deal will go into effect will there be a sliver of hope that life can start again in the devastated Gaza Strip. But the ceasefire must not be conflated with liberation of the Palestinian people. The life that Palestinians have lived in an “open air prison” in Gaza is one of endless pain and violence committed against them by Israel. The life the whole generation of orphaned children will now live, after the genocide, is one scarred with bloodshed, trauma, and the battle to access basic human rights.

For the Palestinians, we must first be united as one, share our dreams,

work together to achieve the hopes of our people, and not allow foreign interference that tries to impose on us solutions that do not meet our ambitions to fully recover our rights. Above all, we must stand by our brothers and sisters in the Gaza Strip to provide them with all the material and moral support we can, to alleviate their suffering and heal their wounds. Families have been wiped out, lives have been uprooted, and for those who survived, their hearts have been permanently broken.

Liberation of Palestinians will only happen the day we have the right to self-determination, the day we are treated as human beings with the right to live the way we want. As Palestinians were killed in their homes, the US and Israel, the perpetrators, talked about who would run the strip. The Biden administration has, for months, been trying to form an international security force that would work alongside an interim Palestinian administration to deal with civilian affairs. The US and Israel do not have the right to determine “who will run the strip.” The day the world understands what's wrong with that criminal school of thought, we can start thinking about Palestinian liberation. But the resilience and movements around the world must continue for us to achieve our freedom.

Palestinian lives remain on the line till the ceasefire comes into effect, and rebuilding Gaza will be a task too difficult to put into words. There are many lessons Palestinians have learnt from this war, and things have forever changed after the most brutal war in our history. The world must reflect on the past 15 months of a horrendous genocide that happened in front of our eyes, on our screens, with the support of the powers that be. We must reflect on the biggest failure of humanity in modern times. At the same time, we Palestinians must also thank all those who have stood by our people and provided support in all its forms, most notably the people of Bangladesh.

Understanding the rising concern of HMPV



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MUSHTUQ HUSAIN

Over the past few weeks, there have been anxious discussions about human metapneumovirus (HMPV) in several countries, including Bangladesh. Hospitals in China, where the ongoing spread has originated, have been alerted as an increasing number of people have become infected with this virus. This has led to speculations about the possibility of a new pandemic. Although this virus is not new to Bangladesh or the world, the concerns have not subsided.

A closer look at HMPV

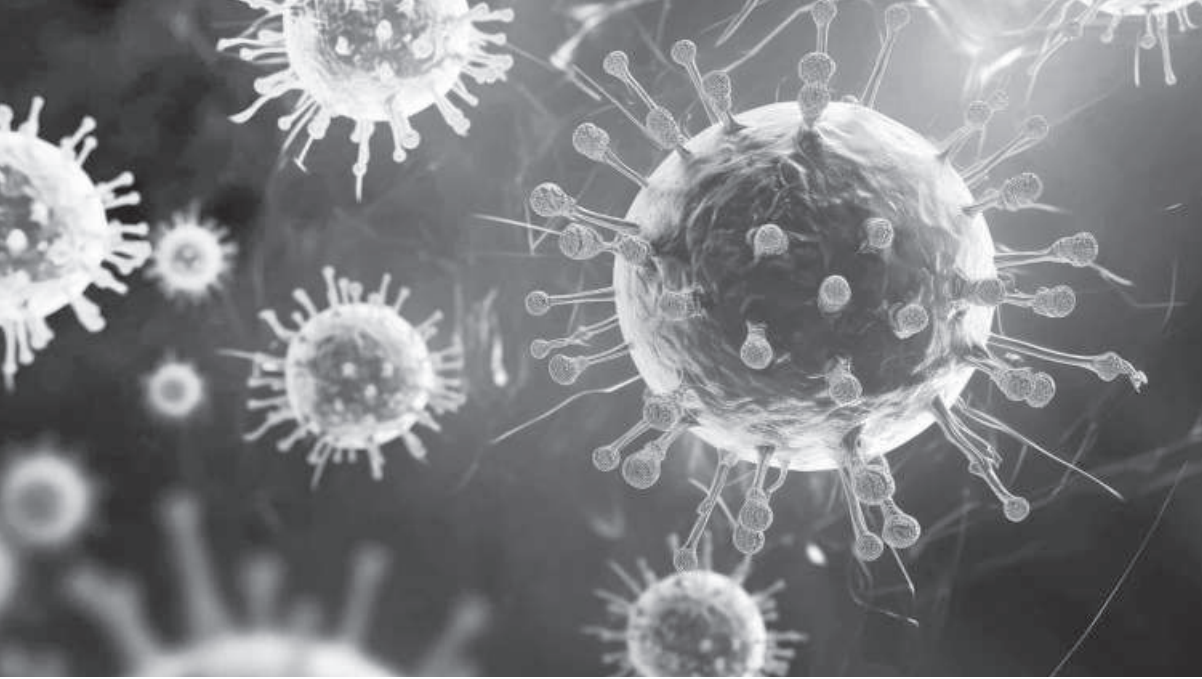
Viruses capable of causing infections can emerge in various ways. To survive, a virus can mutate. When these mutations become extensive, the virus can appear in a new form. A virus may alter its structure to infect humans and gain the ability to cause disease. Animal-borne viruses can mutate to infect humans. Additionally, new viruses can emerge from the combination of viruses from animals, birds, and humans.

HMPV was first identified in the

Netherlands in 2001. Bangladeshi scientists detected the virus in the country soon after. This virus has existed in the world before and is believed to date back to the 1950s. The Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) has been monitoring this virus as part of its respiratory virus surveillance programme since 2017. Since the latest bout started, one HMPV-infected patient with other complications died in Dhaka on January 16.

Like other respiratory viruses such as influenza, RSV, and COVID, HMPV spreads through sneezing and coughing. If a person comes into contact with clothing or any objects contaminated with an infected person's sneeze or cough or touches their nose or mouth after shaking hands or hugging the infected person, they can contract HMPV. This disease has a history of spreading through contact with infected individuals and their respiratory droplets.

Scientists have classified various forms of this virus. However, it is



**HMPV was first identified in the Netherlands in 2001.**

FILE PHOTO: REUTERS

still unknown whether HMPV has undergone significant changes or mutations. So far, this virus is not capable of causing severe illness in humans, and the death rate is very low. However, since it can spread from person to person, it needs to be constantly monitored.

Symptoms and potential hosts

The symptoms of HMPV infection are similar to those of the influenza

virus. An HMPV-infected person may experience fever, sneezing, coughing, shortness of breath, and sore throat. In some cases, the disease may become more severe, leading to pneumonia.

Those at a higher risk include individuals with a weakened immune system, such as children and elderly people over 60 years old, individuals with chronic conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure,

heart disease, cancer, or those requiring kidney dialysis, as well as people with asthma, compromised immune systems due to medication, and pregnant women.

Treatment and prevention

There is no direct antiviral medication for treating HMPV. In this case, symptomatic treatment is provided. Additionally, ensuring proper care for the patient is essential. This virus

typically resolves on its own within 7-10 days without any medication. However, precautions should be taken to ensure that the illness does not become severe for other reasons.

HMPV has not yet reached a state where it could create a situation similar to the COVID pandemic. However, the more the disease spreads, the greater the risk that this virus could develop the ability to cause severe illness. On the other hand, it may also weaken.

HMPV prevention should be approached in the same way as preventing other respiratory diseases. Some key measures to tackle it include regularly washing hands with soap at intervals, covering our nose and mouth with a tissue, cloth or elbow when sneezing or coughing, and maintaining distance from infected individuals. Moreover, infected individuals should wear a mask, and those in close proximity to them should also use masks. If a patient has a fever, they should rest. If symptoms do not subside after three or four days, similar to other viral fevers, medical advice should be sought.

If a large number of patients exceeds hospital capacity, it is considered an emergency public health situation. Therefore, it is crucial to monitor whether the number of HMPV infections is increasing and to ensure that hospitals, laboratories, and epidemiological institutions remain vigilant and prepared to handle any emergency situations.

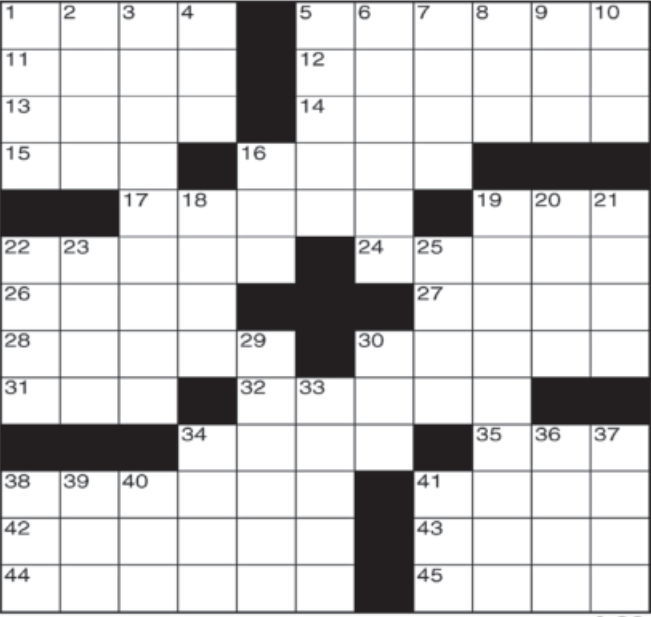
CROSSWORD  
BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Wanes
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- 34 Reach across
- 36 Fancy flower
- 37 Budget amount
- 38 Can. neighbor
- 39 Price setting
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- 41 Nile serpent



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TUESDAY'S ANSWERS



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